

PRESS RELEASE

**Congressman John Conyers, Jr.
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Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
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Conyers to Rumsfeld: If Draftees Have Value, Why Not a Draft?

Today, Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee and Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus, issued the following statement regarding Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's apology for his recent comments disparaging those veterans who had served through the military draft:

"Secretary Rumsfeld's apology does not end this matter. Congressman Rangel and I offered our military draft bill so that we could institute a system whereby all segments of the population share the burden and sacrifice of war. Secretary Rumsfeld shot our idea down, allegedly because of his concern that in the past, draftees were 'sucked into the intake, trained for a period of months, and then went out, adding no value, no advantage, really, to the United States armed services over any sustained period of time.' Now that he has apologized for his insensitive remarks and conceded his opposition was without merit, he needs to explain to the American public why it is not in our nation's interest to institute a draft.

I continue to strongly believe that as our nation beats the drums of war against Iraq, we have begun to view armed conflict far too lightly. It has unfortunately become the duty of someone else's child to go to war and die as the privileged evade the tragic consequences of war. In this time of national unity and patriotism, it is clearly time we call on the better angels of the American spirit and return to the ideal of shared sacrifice. This is the issue that Secretary Rumsfeld needs to address."

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